

Cosmopolitan morality as an element of a democratic global governance and global citizenship

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Abstract

Cosmopolitan ethics has been an element of philosophical thought since the school of Skeptics in late antiquity, but also from Socrates who said "I am neither an Athenian nor a Greek but a citizen of the World". But in the 21st century, how can this thought be integrated into the context of a morality that will characterize people's behavior and can form the foundation of a democratic global governance, based on international institutions of mutual understanding and common legislation procedures? Global problems and their treatment require a common view from individual societies and nations, but in the context of a concept of democracy that will be based on the concept of equality, solidarity and brotherhood as elements of this new morality and at the same time will be qualities of a "citizen of the world", having as a main criterion the sustainability of our planet.

"Cosmopolites de tous les pays encore un effort!"

Jacques Derrida

1. Cosmopolitan morality and global order

In his essay for the famous Kant's *"Perpetual Peace"* invoked by the Abbe St. Pierre, J. Habermas starts commenting that it is "an ideal that should lend the idea of a cosmopolitan order attractiveness an intuitive force. With this, Kant introduces a third dimension into his legal theory: cosmopolitan law (das Recht der Weltbürger)." As we've already explicitly analyzed in the previous chapters of this dissertation, he defends the idea that all forms of the state are based on the idea of a Constitution, compatible with the natural rights of man, that "should lead ultimately to a global legal order that unites all peoples and abolishes war" [1], [2]. This is the establishment of a cosmopolitan order.

Cosmopolitanism as a moral ideal is not the first time that appeared in the human history by this Kantian elaboration. Its origins are from the late Greek antiquity and the Greek philosopher Diogenes of Sinope who responded to question about his citizenship by claiming that he was a "Kosmopolite" (citizen of the world). By this statement, he introduced the philosophical concept of a cosmopolitan morality in the sense that human beings are equal by the nature and are citizens of a universal community. A century later, the Stoics with their moral philosophy gave a stronger political impetus to cosmopolitanism attempted to strengthen this morality based on virtue as a rationalized internalization of natural law. They wanted to create a new political community based on these political principles of the newly appeared cosmopolitan morality. "The new *polis* was the *cosmos*, a political community of a more universalistic nature than the traditional closed *polis*" [3], notes Gerard Delanty, professor of Sociology and Political Thought at the University of Sussex. The Stoics didn't reject the *polis* in the sake of a research of virtue and truth outside,

as was the case with the Cynics, but they asked the reinvention of the polis-state with an enlarged understanding of this new cosmopolitan morality and asking for a new kind of civic engagement. In this morality, the role of the emotions such as love and sympathy were important for producing new forms of social life and cosmopolitan ethics.

The same author writes on this classic cosmopolitanism that: “with the Stoics, the idea of political community is enlarged to take account of a new age of empire in which the traditional idea of a republican self-governing political community as based on a city is re-imagined as a larger entity. In this re-shifting of the horizons of the city, the republican ethos acquires a new meaning with the need to include within it a wider community” [3]. Here, is necessary to be mentioned the concrete historical context in which this new spirit of cosmopolitanism occurred, having to do with the decline of the traditional city-state of the classic Greek antiquity when the Alexander the Great Empire arose in the ruins of this old political formation and a kind of cultural homogenization was spread through the fact that the Greek language became universalized eastward reaching the territories of the old Persian empire till India. It was an era of an early but strong process of globalization, widening the representational schemes of the humanity toward the world. It’s not by coincidence then, that in any period when big socio-political-economic and cultural transformations are taking place, the demand for new moralities is appeared. The changes in these historical periods have a revolutionary character and their impact is radical.

Roman Stoicism in its turn was strongly influenced by the Greek stoicism widening more the idea of belonging in the wider community of the nations in the Roman Empire, and formulating a clearer notion of the *Cosmopolis* as a model of political formation. “Ancient cosmopolitan thinkers include such philosophers as Zeno of Citium, Crysippus, Marcus Cicero, Marcus Aurelius, and Seneca” [4]. As far as the Roman world incorporated the Hellenistic, and the Roman Republic expanded into an Empire including lands from the Near and Middle East, Africa and others, the equation of the city with the widened form of the world-Republic became much more clear, assimilating a lot of other civilizations and by this cosmopolitanism articulated a new vision of the city as a world-representation. A universalistic culture is the amalgam of this philosophical and socio-cultural “shift of paradigm”. In these conditions world monotheistic religions such as Christianity and later Islam were prepared and born, where the “city of God” has to reconcile the individual perspective of the city with the wider vision of the cosmos. The same is for the believers of Islam, as they have to adapt their perceptions for the “Ummah” (community of believers) with the world dominion of God. These historical forms of cosmopolitanism are connected with the empire on one hand as the political formation corresponding to the succession of “polis” as the lower and primary form

of political organization, and the Christian morality who promoted the perception of the world as an “*Ecumeni*” (*Οἰκουμένη*), i.e. as the projection of “*globus terraqueus*” in the ethical life of the humanity. Thus, “*Ecumeni*” is not a geographic term anymore but a whole system of significances, with religious, moral, spiritual and other connotations. *Ecumeni* represents the space where this new morality meets itself and its relation to the world.

But the cosmopolitanism in these ages remained as an exceptional case not a mainstream philosophy. In its classical form, as we know it in its contemporary version, cosmopolitanism is primarily a feature of the modernity. “It was with modernity that cosmopolitanism took on a distinctive political and cultural identity and became more integral to the overall movement of modernity. The development of a cosmopolitan imagination was greatly influenced both by modern secularism and by new ways of thinking about otherness, developments that were centrally connected with geographical discoveries as well as scientific advancement” [3], writes Delanty, in his capacity as one of the most important theoreticians on this subject. It was the spirit of Renaissance together with the Enlightenment new civic republicanism as expressed from Erasmus to Kant, that permitted the development of this modern cosmopolitanism both as a morality and as a political doctrine. Somebody could note that the vision of a “universal monarchy” indoctrinated in the “Germanic Holy Empire” and Charlemagne’s vision of the continuation of the Roman Empire, were harbingers of the later European cosmopolitan proposals such as this of Saint-Pierre’s project for making peace perpetual in Europe (in 1713) which inspired Kant in his seminal work for the “Perpetual peace”. Other thinkers, such as Montesquieu or David Hume who wrote about the “Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth”, have advocated for a new political formation and a new legislative framework distinct from the nation-sate or the empire. This notion had more to do with the idea of a “commonwealth of nations” pushing forward the federal or the con-federal thinking for a new way of government who inspired decisively the American federalists as Madison and Hamilton. This mixture of a newly arose universalism and the international system inaugurated by the Westphalian order are encapsulated in the Kantian ideal for perpetual peace, a pivotal work for the modern political thinking whose influence is lasting till our days.

During 18-19th and early 20th centuries we could see different forms of cosmopolitanism, as G. Delanty describes, such as the “republican nationalism”, closely connected with the “French patriotism” of the French revolution and being inspired from the spirit of liberal nationalism, put the question of the national liberation as central together with the democracy in the national state. The cosmopolitan dimension was expressed through the demand for independence of the nations. Famous examples of this ideological tendency were the national causes of Belgian, Greek, Bulgarian, Irish, Italian and Polish independence, as well as the

“Young Europe League” created by Giusepe Mazzine gave a strong push to the ideals of a broad cosmopolitanism through the liberal nationalism” [3].

Delanty also argues that the first negative meaning in the 19th century to the term “cosmopolitanism” was registered in *The Communist Manifesto* of Marx and Engels, where it was declared: “The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country” [5]. Here, “the association of capitalism with the global reach of capitalism gave to it a new meaning that is both cultural and economic”, notes Delanty, adding that “the notion of cosmopolitanism used here is clearly more akin to more recent theories of globalization” [3]. But the counterpart of the cosmopolitanism of the markets and the commodities in capitalism is the universal demand for emancipation by the proletariat, as was presented in *Manifesto*. Therefore, there are two different models of universalism expressed by the main antagonistic classes in the capitalism, the cosmopolitanism of the markets on one hand and the universalism of the world revolution on the other.

Apart from this notion of course, in the history of ideas there are other expressions of cosmopolitanism related also to the idea of the nation as mentioned above: Delanty refers to the writings of Hegel, Herder and mainly Fichte’s “*Address to the Nation*” (1808) as an example of this universalistic and inclusive character of the modern nation in the German idealism. But one century later, the work of another German liberal-nationalist, Frederich Meinecke, who wrote “*Cosmopolitanism and the National State*” in 1907, came to express the decline of this ideal.

In the end of 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, the increase of the population as well as the flows of migration and refugees around the globe and mainly to the big industrial cities of the developed capitalism led to a shift in the meaning of the cosmopolitanism. The urbanization and the complexities created by the new anthropogenic environment in the big urban centers of the world which were in fact the old commercial centers of the industrial capitalism, posed new problems in the process of the social identification and the construction of new political orders inside these complex systems of the human life-world (lebenswelt). The mega-systems created by the gigantic scale of the new forms of organization and production created the necessity of new political mechanisms of control and management different from the national state, in a more complex technological environment, but in a more limited space. The Mega-polis such as New York, London, Singapore, Shanghai, and othe cities incarnated the new cosmopolitan ideal of the 21st century, associated with the post-modern realities of the late technological and financial capitalism, but they still lack the proper political form of their organization and institutionalization. They are cosmo-polies existing in the

national framework as it was created in the last two or three centuries before. The demand for a new political order is more than necessary, it is urgent.

2. Historical patterns of the cosmopolitan morality articulated as a political order – Proposal for further socio-theoretical elaboration

Having analyzed the basic moments of the evolutionism of the cosmopolitan morality across the centuries, it is necessary to present our elaboration for the political and institutional forms, which these different versions of morality were expressed by, trying to illuminate further the very moment when an “ethos” becomes political. In fact, it is an effort to classify the genealogy of the political based on the evolution of the notion of the *Polis* conceived not just as a social-urban construction but as a more complex system of ethic-political values. *Polis* should be understood as this temporal-spatial dimension of the political and its transformation to a procedure of normative acts and social representations. If we accept that cosmopolitanism has a long tradition taking many forms in its evolution, then it is important to see the variety of the transformation of the “*Polis*” starting from the antiquity as the basis of this longstanding tradition. *Polis* is the place where “the individual has been identified with the universal human community”, writes again Delanty, distinguishing three main forms of cosmopolitanism: “These are the moral cosmopolitanism, political cosmopolitanism and cultural cosmopolitanism” [3].

By this definition, we should consider that “*Polis*” in ancient Greece: morally represents the individualization of the responsibility instead of the collective guiltiness of the community, culturally the transition from the rural community and its rituals, to the city and its civic ceremonies, and politically the passage from the patriarchal kingdom to the democratically elected leadership.

In our evolutionary elaboration, the “*Polis*” is this symbiotic paradigm of the humanity in the development of the history. Habermas has analyzed the Kantian idea of perpetual peace under the prism of the modern cosmopolitanism, clarifying that: “While a perpetual peace is one of its more important characteristics, it is only a symptom of a cosmopolitan order. Kant must still solve the conceptual problem of how this order could be thought of from the viewpoint of law. He must find the proper difference between the cosmopolitan law and classical international law, and thus what is specific to *ius cosmopolitanum*” [1]. By this diagnosis about Kant’s idea, Habermas discovers the essential problem of how a cosmopolitan order understood as a morality, is not yet institutionalized in order to be a kind of cosmopolitan law distinct from the conventional international law, with the aim to “abolish all wars”.

References

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